

Cover Story: The Holy Alliance

By CARL BERNSTEIN Sunday, June 24, 2001

Source :

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,159069,00.html>

Only President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II were present in the Vatican Library on Monday, June 7, 1982. It was the first time the two had met, and they talked for 50 minutes. In the same wing of the papal apartments, Agostino Cardinal Casaroli and Archbishop Achille Silvestrini met with Secretary of State Alexander Haig and Judge William Clark, Reagan's National Security Adviser. Most of their discussion focused on Israel's invasion of Lebanon, then in its second day; Haig told them Prime Minister Menachem Begin had assured him that the invasion would not go farther than 25 miles inside Lebanon.

But Reagan and the Pope spent only a few minutes reviewing events in the Middle East. Instead they remained focused on a subject much closer to their heart: Poland and the Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe. In that meeting, Reagan and the Pope agreed to undertake a clandestine campaign to hasten the dissolution of the communist empire. Declares Richard Allen, Reagan's first National Security Adviser: "This was one of the great secret alliances of all time."

The operation was focused on Poland, the most populous of the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe and the birthplace of John Paul II. Both the Pope and the President were convinced that Poland could be broken out of

the Soviet orbit if the Vatican and the U.S. committed their resources to destabilizing the Polish government and keeping the outlawed Solidarity movement alive after the declaration of martial law in 1981.

Until Solidarity's legal status was restored in 1989 it flourished underground, supplied, nurtured and advised largely by the network established under the auspices of Reagan and John Paul II. Tons of equipment -- fax machines (the first in Poland), printing presses, transmitters, telephones, shortwave radios, video cameras, photocopiers, telex machines, computers, word processors -- were smuggled into Poland via channels established by priests and American agents and representatives of the AFL-CIO and European labor movements. Money for the banned union came from CIA funds, the National Endowment for Democracy, secret accounts in the Vatican and Western trade unions.

Lech Walesa and other leaders of Solidarity received strategic advice -- often conveyed by priests or American and European labor experts working undercover in Poland -- that reflected the thinking of the Vatican and the Reagan Administration. As the effectiveness of the resistance grew, the stream of information to the West about the internal decisions of the Polish government and the contents of Warsaw's communications with Moscow became a flood. The details came not only from priests but also from spies within the Polish government.

Down with Yalta

According to aides who shared their leaders' view of the world, Reagan and John Paul II refused to accept a fundamental political fact of their lifetimes: the division of Europe as mandated at Yalta and the communist dominance of Eastern Europe. A free, noncommunist Poland, they were convinced, would be a dagger to the heart of the Soviet empire; and if Poland became democratic, other East European states would follow.

"We both felt that a great mistake had been made at Yalta and something should be done," Reagan says today. "Solidarity was the very weapon for bringing this about, because it was an organization of the laborers of Poland." Nothing quite like Solidarity had ever existed in Eastern Europe, Reagan notes, adding that the workers' union "was contrary to anything the Soviets would want or the communists ((in Poland)) would want."

According to Solidarity leaders, Walesa and his lieutenants were aware that both Reagan and John Paul II were committed to Solidarity's survival, but they could only guess at the extent of the collaboration. "Officially I didn't know the church was working with the U.S.," says Wojciech Adamiecki, the organizer and editor of underground Solidarity newspapers and now a counselor at the Polish embassy in Washington. "We were told the Pope had warned the Soviets that if they entered Poland he would fly to Poland and stay with the Polish people. The church was of primary assistance. It was half open, half secret. Open as far as humanitarian aid -- food, money, medicine, doctors' consultations held in churches, for instance -- and secret as far as supporting political activities: distributing printing machines of all kinds, giving us a place for underground meetings, organizing special demonstrations."

At their first meeting, Reagan and John Paul II discussed something else they had in common: both had survived assassination attempts only six weeks apart in 1981, and both believed God had saved them for a special mission. "A close friend of Ronald Reagan's told me the President said, 'Look how the evil forces were put in our way and how Providence intervened,'" says Pio Cardinal Laghi, the former apostolic delegate to Washington. According to National Security Adviser Clark, the Pope and Reagan referred to the) "miraculous" fact that they had survived. Clark said the men shared "a unity of spiritual view and a unity of vision on the Soviet empire: that right or correctness would ultimately prevail in the divine plan."

"Reagan came in with very simple and strongly held views," says Admiral Bobby Inman, former deputy director of the CIA. "It is a valid point of view that he saw the collapse ((of communism)) coming and he pushed it -- hard." During the first half of 1982, a five-part strategy emerged that was aimed at bringing about the collapse of the Soviet economy, fraying the ties that bound the U.S.S.R. to its client states in the Warsaw Pact and forcing reform inside the Soviet empire. Elements of that strategy included:

- The U.S. defense buildup already under way, aimed at making it too costly for the Soviets to compete militarily with the U.S. Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative -- Star Wars -- became a centerpiece of the strategy.
- Covert operations aimed at encouraging reform movements in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland.
- Financial aid to Warsaw Pact nations calibrated to their willingness to protect human rights and undertake political and free-market reforms.
- Economic isolation of the Soviet Union and the withholding of Western and Japanese technology from Moscow. The Administration focused on denying the U.S.S.R. what it had hoped would be its principal source of hard currency in the 21st century: profits from a transcontinental pipeline to supply natural gas to Western Europe. The 3,600-mile-long pipeline, stretching from Siberia to France, opened on time on Jan. 1, 1984, but on a far smaller scale than the Soviets had hoped.
- Increased use of Radio Liberty, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe to transmit the Administration's messages to the peoples of Eastern Europe.

Yet in 1982 neither Reagan nor the Pope could anticipate the accession of a Soviet leader like Mikhail Gorbachev, the father of glasnost and perestroika; his efforts at reform unleashed powerful forces that spun out of his control and led to the breakup of the Soviet Union. The

Washington-Vatican alliance "didn't cause the fall of communism," observes a U.S. official familiar with the details of the plot to keep Solidarity alive. "Like all great and lucky leaders, the Pope and the President exploited the forces of history to their own ends."

The Crackdown

The campaign by Washington and the Vatican to keep Solidarity alive began immediately after General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law on Dec. 13, 1981. In those dark hours, Poland's communications with the noncommunist world were cut; 6,000 leaders of Solidarity were detained; hundreds were charged with treason, subversion and counterrevolution; nine were killed; and the union was banned. But thousands of others went into hiding, many seeking protection in churches, rectories and with priests. Authorities took Walesa into custody and interned him in a remote hunting lodge.

Shortly after Polish security forces moved into the streets, Reagan called the Pope for his advice. At a series of meetings over the next few days, Reagan discussed his options. "We had a massive row in the Cabinet and the National Security Council about putting together a menu of counteractions," former Secretary of State Haig recalls. "They ranged from sanctions that would have been crushing in their impact on Poland to talking so tough that we would have risked creating another situation like Hungary in '56 or Czechoslovakia in '68."

Haig dispatched Ambassador at Large Vernon Walters, a devout Roman Catholic, to meet with John Paul II. Walters arrived in Rome soon after, and met separately with the Pope and with Cardinal Casaroli, the Vatican secretary of state. Both sides agreed that Solidarity's flame must not be extinguished, that the Soviets must become the focus of an international campaign of isolation, and that the Polish government must be subjected to moral and limited economic pressure.

According to U.S. intelligence sources, the Pope had already advised Walesa through church channels to keep his movement operating underground, and to pass the word to Solidarity's 10 million members not to go into the streets and risk provoking Warsaw Pact intervention or civil war with Polish security forces. Because the communists had cut the direct phone lines between Poland and the Vatican, John Paul II communicated with Jozef Cardinal Glemp in Warsaw via radio. He also dispatched his envoys to Poland to report on the situation. "The Vatican's information was absolutely better and quicker than ours in every respect," says Haig. "Though we had some excellent sources of our own, our information was taking too long to filter through the intelligence bureaucracy."

In the first hours of the crisis, Reagan ordered that the Pope receive as quickly as possible relevant American intelligence, including information from * a Polish Deputy Minister of Defense who was secretly reporting to the CIA. Washington also handed over to the Vatican reports and analysis from Colonel Ryszard Kuklinski, a senior member of the Polish general staff, who was a CIA informant until November 1981, when he had to be smuggled out of Poland after he warned that the Soviets were prepared to invade if the Polish government did not impose martial law. Kuklinski had issued a similar warning about a Soviet military action in late 1980, which led the outgoing Carter Administration to send secret messages to Leonid Brezhnev informing him that among the costs of an invasion would be the sale of sophisticated U.S. weapons to China. This time, Kuklinski reported to Washington, Brezhnev had grown more impatient, and a disastrous harvest at home meant that the Kremlin did not need mechanized army units to help bring in the crops and instead could spare them for an invasion. "Anything that we knew that we thought the Pope would not be aware of, we certainly brought it to his attention," says Reagan. "Immediately."

The Catholic Team

The key Administration players were all devout Roman Catholics -- CIA chief William Casey, Allen, Clark, Haig, Walters and William Wilson, Reagan's first ambassador to the Vatican. They regarded the U.S.-Vatican relationship as a holy alliance: the moral force of the Pope and the teachings of their church combined with their fierce anticommunism and their notion of American democracy. Yet the mission would have been impossible without the full support of Reagan, who believed fervently in both the benefits and the practical applications of Washington's relationship with the Vatican. One of his earliest goals as President, Reagan says, was to recognize the Vatican as a state "and make them an ally."

According to Admiral John Poindexter, the military assistant to the National Security Adviser when martial law was declared in Poland, Reagan was convinced that the communists had made a huge miscalculation: after allowing Solidarity to operate openly for 16 months before the crackdown, the Polish government would only alienate its countrymen by attempting to cripple the labor movement and, most important, would bring the powerful church into direct conflict with the Polish regime. "I didn't think that this ((the decision to impose martial law and crush Solidarity)) could stand, because of the history of Poland and the religious aspect and all," Reagan says. Says Cardinal Casaroli: "There was a real coincidence of interests between the U.S. and the Vatican."

The major decisions on funneling aid to Solidarity and responding to the Polish and Soviet governments were made by Reagan, Casey and Clark, in consultation with John Paul II. "Reagan understood these things quite well, including the covert side," says Richard Pipes, the conservative Polish-born scholar who headed the NSC's Soviet and East European desks. "The President talked about the evil of the Soviet system -- not its people -- and how we had to do everything possible to help these people in Solidarity who were struggling for freedom. People like Haig and Commerce Secretary

Malcolm Baldrige and James Baker ((White House chief of staff at the time)) thought it wasn't realistic. George Bush never said a word. I used to sit behind him, and I never knew what his opinions were. But Reagan really understood what was at stake."

By most accounts, Casey stepped into the vacuum in the first days after the declaration of martial law in Poland and -- as he did in Central America -- became the principal policy architect. Meanwhile Pipes and the NSC staff began drafting proposals for sanctions. "The object was to drain the Soviets and to lay blame for martial law at their doorstep," says Pipes. "The sanctions were coordinated with Special Operations ((the CIA division in charge of covert task forces)), and the first objective was to keep Solidarity alive by supplying money, communications and equipment."

"The church was trying to modulate the whole situation," explains one of the NSC officials who directed the effort to curtail the pipeline. "They ((church leaders)) were in effect trying to create circumstances that would head off the serious threat of Soviet intervention while allowing us to get tougher and tougher; they were part and parcel of virtually all of our deliberations in terms of how we viewed the evolution of government-sponsored repression in Poland -- whether it was lessening or getting worse, and how we should proceed."

As for his conversations with Reagan about Poland, Clark says they were usually short. "I don't think I ever had an in-depth, one-on-one, private conversation that existed for more than three minutes with him -- on any subject. That might shock you. We had our own code of communication. I knew where he wanted to go on Poland. And that was to take it to its nth possibilities. The President and Casey and I discussed the situation on the ground in Poland constantly: covert operations; who was doing what, where, why and how; and the chances of success." According to Clark, he and Casey directed that the President's daily brief -- the PDB, an

intelligence summary prepared by the CIA -- include a special supplement on secret operations and analysis in Poland.

The Pope himself, not only his deputies, met with American officials to assess events in Poland and the effectiveness of American actions and sent back messages -- sometimes by letter, sometimes orally -- to Reagan. On almost all his trips to Europe and the Middle East, Casey flew first to Rome, so that he could meet with John Paul II and exchange information. But the principal emissary between Washington and Rome remained Walters, a former deputy director of the CIA who worked easily with Casey. Walters met with the Pope perhaps a dozen times, according to Vatican sources. "Walters was sent to and from the Vatican for the specific purpose of carrying messages between the Pope and the President," says former U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Wilson. "It wasn't supposed to be known that Walters was there. It wasn't all specifically geared to Poland; sometimes there were also discussions about Central America or the hostages in Lebanon."

Often in the Reagan years, American covert operations (including those in Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Angola) involved "lethal assistance" to insurgent forces: arms, mercenaries, military advisers and explosives. In Poland the Pope, the President and Casey embarked on the opposite path: "What they had to do was let the natural forces already in place play this out and not get their fingerprints on it," explains an analyst. What emerges from the Reagan- Casey collaboration is a carefully calibrated operation whose scope was modest compared with other CIA activities. "If Casey were around now, he'd be having some smiles," observes one of his reluctant admirers. "In 1991 Reagan and Casey got the reordering of the world that they wanted."

The Secret Directive

Less than three weeks before his meeting with the Pope in 1982, the President signed a secret national-security-decision directive (NSDD 32) that authorized a range of economic, diplomatic and covert measures to "neutralize efforts of the U.S.S.R." to maintain its hold on Eastern Europe. In practical terms, the most important covert operations undertaken were those inside Poland. The primary purposes of NSDD 32 were to destabilize the Polish government through covert operations involving propaganda and organizational aid to Solidarity; the promotion of human rights, particularly those related to the right of worship and the Catholic Church; economic pressure; and diplomatic isolation of the communist regime. The document, citing the need to defend democratic reform efforts throughout the Soviet empire, also called for increasing propaganda and underground broadcasting operations in Eastern Europe, actions that Reagan's aides and dissidents in Eastern Europe believe were particularly helpful in chipping away at the notion of Soviet invincibility.

As Republican Congressman Henry Hyde, a member of the House Intelligence Committee from 1985 to 1990, who was apprised of some of the Administration's covert actions, observes, "In Poland we did all of the things that are done in countries where you want to destabilize a communist government and strengthen resistance to that. We provided the supplies and technical assistance in terms of clandestine newspapers, broadcasting, propaganda, money, organizational help and advice. And working outward from Poland, the same kind of resistance was organized in the other communist countries of Europe."

Among those who played a consulting role was Zbigniew Brzezinski, a native of Poland and President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser. "I got along very well with Casey," recalls Brzezinski. "He was very flexible and very imaginative and not very bureaucratic; if something needed to be

done, it was done. To sustain an underground effort takes a lot in terms of supplies, networks, etc., and this is why Solidarity wasn't crushed."

On military questions, American intelligence was better than the Vatican's, but the church excelled in its evaluations of the political situation. And in understanding the mood of the people and communicating with the Solidarity leadership, the church was in an incomparable position. "Our information about Poland was very well founded because the bishops were in continual contact with the Holy See and Solidarnosc," explains Cardinal Silvestrini, the Vatican's deputy secretary of state at that time. "They informed us about prisoners, about the activities and needs of Solidarity groups and about the attitude and schisms in the government." All this information was communicated to the President or Casey.

"If you study the situation of Solidarity, you see they acted very cleverly, without pressing too much at the crucial moments, because they had guidance from the church," says one of the Pope's closest aides. "Yes, there were times we restrained Solidarnosc. But Poland was a bomb that could explode -- in the heart of communism, bordered by the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Too much pressure, and the bomb would go off."

Casey's Cappuccino

Meanwhile, in Washington a close relationship developed between Casey, Clark and Archbishop Laghi. "Casey and I dropped into his ((Laghi's)) residence early mornings during critical times to gather his comments and counsel," says Clark. "We'd have breakfast and coffee and discuss what was being done in Poland. I'd speak to him frequently on the phone, and he would be in touch with the Pope." Says Laghi: "They liked good cappuccino. Occasionally we might talk about Central America or the church position on birth control. But usually the subject was Poland."

"Almost everything having to do with Poland was handled outside of normal State Department channels and would go through Casey and Clark," says Robert McFarlane, who served as a deputy to both Clark and Haig and later as National Security Adviser to the President. "I knew that they were meeting with Pio Laghi, and that Pio Laghi had been to see the President, but Clark would never tell me what the substance of the discussions was."

On at least six occasions Laghi came to the White House and met with Clark or the President; each time, he entered the White House through the southwest gate in order to avoid reporters. "By keeping in such close touch, we did not cross lines," says Laghi. "My role was primarily to facilitate meetings between Walters and the Holy Father. The Holy Father knew his people. It was a very complex situation -- how to insist on human rights, on religious freedom, and keep Solidarity alive without provoking the communist authorities further. But I told Vernon, 'Listen to the Holy Father. We have 2,000 years' experience at this.' "

Though William Casey has been vilified for aspects of his tenure as CIA chief, there is no criticism of his instincts on Poland. "Basically, he had a quiet confidence that the communists couldn't hold on, especially in Poland," says former Congressman Edward Derwinski, a Polish-speaking expert on Eastern Europe who counseled the Administration and met with Casey frequently. "He was convinced the system was falling and doomed to collapse one way or another -- and Poland was the force that would lead to the dam breaking. He demanded a constant ((CIA)) focus on Eastern Europe. It wasn't noticed, because other stories were more controversial and were perking at the moment -- Nicaragua and Salvador."

In Poland, Casey conducted the kind of old-style operation that he relished, something he might have done in his days at the Office of Strategic Services during World War II or in the early years of the CIA, when the democracies of Western Europe rose from the ashes of World War II. It was through Casey's contacts, his associates say, that elements of the Socialist

International were organized on behalf of Solidarity -- just as the Social Democratic parties of Western Europe had been used as an instrument of American policy by the CIA in helping to create anticommunist governments after the war. And this time the objective was akin to creating a Christian Democratic majority in Poland -- with the church and the overwhelmingly Catholic membership of Solidarity as the dominant political force in a postcommunist Poland. Through his contacts with leaders of the Socialist International, including officials of socialist governments in France and Sweden, Casey ensured that tactical assistance was available on the Continent and at sea to move goods into Poland. "This wasn't about spending huge amounts of money," says Brzezinski. "It was about getting the message out and resisting: books, communications equipment, propaganda, ink and printing presses."

Look for the Union Label

In almost every city and town, underground newspapers and mimeographed bulletins appeared, challenging the state-controlled media. The church published its own newspapers. Solidarity missives, photocopied and mimeographed on American-supplied equipment, were tacked to church bulletin boards. Stenciled posters were boldly posted on police stations and government buildings and even on entrances to the state-controlled television center, where army officers broadcast the news.

The American embassy in Warsaw became the pivotal CIA station in the communist world and, by all accounts, the most effective. Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO, which had been the largest source of American support for Solidarity before martial law, regarded the Reagan Administration's approach as too slow and insufficiently confrontational with the Polish authorities. Nonetheless, according to intelligence sources, AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland and his aide Tom Kahn consulted frequently with Poindexter, Clark and other officials at the State Department and the NSC on such matters as how and when to move goods and supplies into Poland,

identifying cities where Solidarity was in particular need of organizing assistance, and examining how Solidarity and the AFL-CIO might collaborate in the preparation of propaganda materials.

"Lane Kirkland deserves special credit," observes Derwinski. "They don't like to admit ((it)), but they literally were in lockstep ((with the Administration)). Also never forget that Bill Clark's wife is Czechoslovak, as is Lane Kirkland's wife. This is one issue where everybody was aboard; there were no turf fights or mavericks or naysayers."

But AFL-CIO officials were never aware of the extent of clandestine U.S. assistance, or the Administration's reliance on the church for guidance regarding how hard to push Polish and Soviet authorities. Casey was wary of "contaminating" the American and European labor movements by giving them too many details of the Administration's efforts. And indeed this was not strictly a CIA operation. Rather, it was a blend of covert and overt, public policy and secret alliances. Casey recognized that in many instances the AFL-CIO was more imaginative than his own operatives in providing organizational assistance to Solidarity and smuggling equipment into the country. According to former deputy CIA director Inman, Casey decided that the American labor movement's relationship with Solidarity was so good that much of what the CIA needed could be financed and obtained through AFL-CIO channels. "Financial support wasn't what they needed," says Inman. "It was organization, and that was an infinitely better way to help them than through classic covert operations."

The Solidarity office in Brussels became an international clearinghouse: for representatives of the Vatican, for CIA operatives, for the AFL-CIO, for representatives of the Socialist International, for the congressionally funded National Endowment for Democracy, which also worked closely with Casey. It was the place where Solidarity told its backers -- some of whose real identities were unknown to Solidarity itself -- what it needed, where goods and supplies and organizers could be most useful. Priests,

couriers, labor organizers and intelligence operatives moved in and out of Poland with requests for aid and with detailed information on the situation inside the government and the underground. Food and clothing and money to pay fines of Solidarity leaders who were brought before Polish courts poured into the country. Inside Poland, a network of priests carried messages back and forth between the churches where many of Solidarity's leaders were in hiding.

In the summer of 1984, when the sanctions against Poland seemed to be hurting ordinary Poles and not the communists, Laghi traveled to Santa Barbara to meet with Reagan at the Western White House and urge that some of the sanctions be lifted. The Administration complied. At the same time, the White House, in close consultation with the Vatican, refused to ease its economic pressures on Moscow -- denying technology, food and cultural exchanges as the price for continuing oppression in Poland.

Much of the equipment destined for Solidarity arrived in Poland by ship -- often packed in mismarked containers sent from Denmark and Sweden, then unloaded at Gdansk and other ports by dockers secretly working with Solidarity. According to Administration officials, the socialist government of Sweden -- and Swedish labor unions -- played a crucial role in arranging the transshipment of goods to Poland. From the Polish docks, equipment moved to its destination in trucks and private cars driven by Solidarity sympathizers who often used churches and priests as their point of contact for deliveries and pickups.

"Solidarity Lives!"

"The Administration plugged into the church across the board," observes Derwinski, now Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "Not just through the church hierarchy but through individual churches and bishops. Monsignor Bronislaw Dabrowski, a deputy to Cardinal Glemp, came to us often to tell us what was needed: he would meet with me, with Casey, the NSC and

sometimes with Walters." John Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia, whose father was born in Poland, was the American churchman closest to the Pope. He frequently met with Casey to discuss support for Solidarity and covert operations, according to CIA sources and Derwinski. "Krol hit it off very well with President Reagan and was a source of constant advice and contact," says Derwinski. "Often he was the one Casey or Clark went to, the one who really understood the situation."

By 1985 it was apparent that the Polish government's campaign to suppress Solidarity had failed. According to a report by Adrian Karatnycky, who helped organize the AFL-CIO's assistance to Solidarity, there were more than 400 underground periodicals appearing in Poland, some with a circulation that exceeded 30,000. Books and pamphlets challenging the authority of the communist government were printed by the thousands. Comic books for children recast Polish fables and legends, with Jaruzelski pictured as the villain, communism as the red dragon and Walesa as the heroic knight. In church basements and homes, millions of viewers watched documentary videos produced and screened on the equipment smuggled into the country.

With clandestine broadcasting equipment supplied by the CIA and the AFL-CIO, Solidarity regularly broke into the government's radio programming, often with the message "Solidarity lives!" or "Resist!" Armed with a transmitter supplied by the CIA through church channels, Solidarity interrupted television programming with both audio and visual messages, including calls for strikes and demonstrations. "There was a great moment at the half time of the national soccer championship," says a Vatican official. "Just as the whistle sounded for the half, a SOLIDARITY LIVES! banner went up on the screen and a tape came on calling for resistance. What was particularly ingenious was waiting for the half-time break; had the interruption come during actual soccer play, it could have alienated

people." As Brzezinski sums it up, "This was the first time that communist police suppression didn't succeed."

"Nobody believed the collapse of communism would happen this fast or on this timetable," says a cardinal who is one of the Pope's closest aides. "But in their first meeting, the Holy Father and the President committed themselves and the institutions of the church and America to such a goal. And from that day, the focus was to bring it about in Poland."

Step by reluctant step, the Soviets and the communist government of Poland bowed to the moral, economic and political pressure imposed by the Pope and the President. Jails were emptied, Walesa's trial on charges of slandering state officials was abandoned, the Polish communist party turned fratricidal, and the country's economy collapsed in a haze of strikes and demonstrations and sanctions.

On Feb. 19, 1987, after Warsaw had pledged to open a dialogue with the church, Reagan lifted U.S. sanctions. Four months later, Pope John Paul II was cheered by millions of his countrymen as he traveled across Poland demanding human rights and praising Solidarity. In July 1988, Gorbachev visited Warsaw and signaled Moscow's recognition that the government could not rule without Solidarity's cooperation. On April 5, 1989, the two sides signed agreements legalizing Solidarity and calling for open parliamentary elections in June. In December 1990, nine years after he was arrested and his labor union banned, Lech Walesa became President of Poland.